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**Information Technology  
Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC)  
Annual Report  
2005 - 2006**

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## I. Introduction

This year was a milestone year for ITSAC in terms of membership. For the first year since the inception of the committee, all student government representative positions were filled. From the perspective of the Chair, this signals that the committee may have finally reached a level of recognized importance amongst the student governments across campus, and will in turn have much greater validity in its ability to represent the full spectrum of student perspectives.

Some minor changes were made to the terms of reference this year. The Student Senate Caucus will be represented by one individual rather than the original two, and there will be a Library ITS staff member on the committee to reflect the new partnership between CCS and the Library along with the importance of the Library as a central physical and virtual IT location on campus.

Future challenges for the committee include revised expectations around the length of membership terms which may not be able to reflect the two year rotation originally intended for the committee. This may need to be an early issue for next year's committee to address. Also, there was discussion early in the year about the inclusion of an Interhall representative to ensure the large number of residential students are adequately represented.

This year, the committee chose a few IT areas on which they would focus throughout the year. These areas were considered to be high priority issues for students. Setting the core agenda items in advance provided two benefits – it ensured that members were able to bring input from their constituents to the meetings and the Chair was also able to invite appropriate guest speakers to each meeting to provide information and informed discussion. The core discussions from the year will provide the outline for this year's ITSAC Final Report for 2006.

### Information Technology Student Advisory Committee – 2006 Committee Members

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## II. Portal

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Library content in the portal is important
- Multiple members of ITSAC feel there should be direct links from the first login page to the resources that would be most used rather than having to go to a resource section.
- The ultimate goal will be to allow users to personalize the portal to their own tastes.
- It would be ideal if the portal could provide a calendar populated with student courses.
- Having things automated (courses already scheduled for example) is an important portal feature
- A link between the briefcase and web publishing files for editing would be helpful
- How is the portal development tapping into the needs of student clubs?.
- A way for people to publish info in a template form would make it much more possible for clubs to participate in portal channels - a resource that helps get their information directly into the portal
- The university should look for the organization of sites that could benefit students by being in the portal
- Could the Athletics website be tied into the portal as well? Intramural times and varsity teams to have schedules on their own portal page
- Targeting information to specific audiences - and allow people to opt into this information.
- Students should have the ability to opt in or out of many channels – perhaps in the first few weeks, they have access to all channels to let them see what is there, and then they have to do 'spring cleaning to get back out'
- Search capabilities - can you enter a search word and find channels that apply to that search world?

The following are specific comments about the Portal from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CASU - Christian Casupanan**

We wonder if the portal is strictly academic. Can we insert select student life pieces: suggestions are Sunday Night Cinema listings, a link to The Cannon ([www.thecannon.ca](http://www.thecannon.ca)) an upcoming events page that's a bit more engaging than the university homepage's events calendar? It is favourable that the main goal of the portal is to eventually allow each student to personalize which content is on their specific portal page. There should still be content that MUST be on the page (i.e. common to all portal pages, and cannot be removed). The portal gives a unique opportunity for student organization clubs to advertise their events to a wider audience and to generally advertise their presence on campus.

### **OVC - Russell Fraser**

Our students believe that the portal will be useful if it is also easy to use and user-friendly. In order to become routinely used by students, individual customization will be important – whether this is with respect to look, or addition of RSS feeds. Better integration of the three main services (WebMail, WebAdvisor, WebCT) into the portal “feel” will encourage more use. Too much navigation once logged in offers no real advantage over logging into the service separately. For those on slower connections, the portal is less useful than going directly to the service they want to use (WebMail, WebAdvisor, WebCT). I believe there was mention at some point of a preview of your inbox being available in the actual Portal site – this is a great idea and should be implemented. In terms of customizability, it would be most useful for the user to be able to define what is most important to them, so that they can have those particular services all available under the “Home” section of the portal. Each individual should define that they want, including courses, webmail preview, and a webadvisor link all on “Home” – thus centralizing the individual’s use. Extraneous or less important things such as campus news, LaunchPad, etc., could go onto other pages (as defined them). The calendar feature that has been previewed of late is also a superb feature, and should certainly be implemented. The calendar allows you to join different Calendar Groups

– Groups could theoretically be created for each course, and each student automatically registered into those Groups, and thus a customized, online schedule created for each student. If the calendar was compatible with other calendar programs, such as Outlook or Sunbird, or PDAs, this would increase its usefulness even more.

#### **SFOAC - Heather Hargrave**

It is essential to have all academic resources linked to one site. Our students like the idea of having to only log in once and then being able to check email, student account and WebCT courses. The Portal will allow incoming students to have a better understanding and knowledge of the academic support services available to them.

#### **GSA - Jason Swaby**

Members of the GSA suggested adding a way to filter things such as awards that would make it easier for new students to the school, as well as international students, to find funding application forms. Access to the user's web space on the portal would be nice. Many people don't know that they have or have access to in web space. The GSA is anxiously awaiting the release of the Portal. The idea of a portal and its benefits make it a very sought after method for integrating several technology services that the university provides.

#### **CSAHS - Chris Killer**

CSAHS members are interested in knowing if the portal will provide direct and easily accessible links. We also discussed if students would find the integration of the main online services offered at the university as useful or just a redundant application to what is currently offered. The idea of the briefcase is excellent and members think this will be instrumental with group projects. A security concern was raised around the possibility that students forget to sign out of the portal, say at the library when they are checking their email, leaving all their online services vulnerable – specifically WebAdvisor with course selections and financial information. What safeguards are there? The portal is viewed as a great way to integrate the online services offered at the university and will be a great foundation to build on. Some believe the process will not be as efficient as thought. Initially there will be many early adopters who will be keen to try the new portal. However, it will be awhile before a shift of everyone's mind frame to use the portal. Overall, it will be an instrumental tool and resource for students at this school.

#### **CBSSC - Alyson Prokop**

Since the announcement of the portal to our constituents on the CBS board, there has been a lot of positive feedback and anticipation as to when it will be available. Students are most eager to be able to have single sign on and eliminate extraneous web pages such as in WebCT, and to eliminate time wasted doing these tasks. Customization is high on the list of priorities for our students. Having important notices as "flagged" messages on a welcome page, which can be from subscribed student groups, the student council, registrar etc... will be helpful in disseminating information. We understand that the main page would be filled with links to other sites within the portal. If the main page could be customized so that once a student logs in, it automatically loads to their choice of content e.g. WEBmail as opposed to an index page, this could eliminate time spent ciphering through unnecessary or unwanted pages.

### III. Web publishing

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Personal blogs will be stored in a personal home directory and will affect quota
  - access to style sheets for users to change look and feel is important
- Students are interested in PHP access for their web publishing needs
- Many grad students are working on research stuff and would like to post information – this is something they would benefit from to illustrate their capabilities to employers..
- Templates to help students quickly publish to the we would be favourable
- Tutorials at the beginning of the semesters specifically to help clubs set up a websites, based on templates
- A simple tool or base template - similar to the blog – would take the mystery out of this
- The committee as a whole feels that personal websites are more relevant than blogging
- You can add resumes or student government related information on personal sites
- A discussion feature would be an asset.
- My Space and Facebook are taking off, people are looking at this as a community - can we develop this kind of participation within the portal?
- If there could be a social network attached to blogging would this be more helpful? Higher value and useful
- Could you add things to the blog, like resumes and other attachments.
- Blog authentication should be tied to the university to provide a culture of accountability

Specific comments about the Web Publishing service from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

#### **CASU - Christian Casupanan**

Is it possible to send an email to the clubs on campus to advertise training for web publishing, or an FAQ, or provide a contact list for them to use if they need it? There are also some clubs that do not have a website. An FAQ as discussed above, or even a broader “IT starter kit” would be a great asset to clubs that are just starting out. Perhaps it would be advantageous to coordinate with Student Life when an application is received for a new student club.

#### **OVC – Russell Fraser**

Individual sites are not very important to the majority of the students, but club websites play a very important role. The biggest hindrance to website publishing is knowledge of HTML/coding languages, FTP, etc. An online page creation system (e.g. Yahoo! PageBuilder) or perhaps page Templates would allow those without much web knowledge to create and maintain sites. The blogs will perhaps improve on this, as they promise to be user-friendly and more amenable to use by the everyday student.

#### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

Website publishing is extremely important for student governments and clubs since it is probably the most effective and highly used way to get information out to students about upcoming events and important information. Everything is moving towards email, websites and more technology in general, and a website is becoming the means in which prospective students choose which university and which program they would like to study. The use of web publishing resources needs to be introduced to students and perhaps all college governments should send a representative each year to a web publishing seminar or training course that is put on by CCS so everyone understands what web publishing programs are and are not compatible with the university server

**GSA – Jason Swaby**

The CIS Club does not offer services to Graduate students in the CIS department. The funding they get for events and resources are provided by the CPES student government, and the undergraduate student association. Database access should be available upon request by a student, and it is possible to add PHP to the system (as opposed to Perl) with the same amount of restrictions that the current dynamic content engine (Perl) has. Though the hardware limitations exist, the benefits of PHP far outweigh the benefits of Perl. There have also been complaints about the amount of time it takes for a research group to get a website/web space through the CCS department. Also, many of them do not understand how to go about administering their website once they get the account. This inevitably slows down their research progress. A formally laid out plan (or directions to a plan) would be nice (even if it is on the portal). Blogs available through CCS are not the same caliber as free, commercially available blogs such as Blogger, Livejournal, and Xanga. The features and security are not as sophisticated and the layout of the administration portion of the blogs are still in its infancy. Moreover, many of the members of the GSA did not know what a blog was, or how they could use it.

**CSAHS – Chris Killer**

Personal blogs will be great and we know that many students already use them. Hopefully clubs will take advantage of website space. It would be great to see generic templates that clubs could easily use when developing their websites. The easier websites are to make, the more clubs and organizations will be able to take advantage of them.

**CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Our main means of communication with our student is through our listserv, and our website. Training sessions for student governments and clubs would be of great necessity as most of our students only know very simple procedures for making websites. There are mixed reviews on the use of blogs. Most students utilize other services if they wish to have a blog, and feel that the university offering this service, especially when it affects quota, is unnecessary. Student groups and faculty would benefit the most from blogs, not individual students. As a side note, there appear to be a lot of “dead” links when you search on the UG website.

## IV. Wireless connectivity

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Wireless signage across campus is important
- Keep UofG administration and recruiting services in the loop on wireless and computing developments to ensure new students/potential students are aware
- Technology is part of the choice for choosing a university
- Most students would choose laptop over cell phone - laptops are much better as a teaching tool
  - It is very likely that students have both at which point it becomes an issue of cost to the student as it costs money to send or receive messages over cell phones - msn is free - wireless is free as well
- Students use laptops to communicate with others - MSN - and in the classroom for notes
- The wireless issue for classrooms is pretty polarized - campus wide wireless would be good, but classroom wireless is still a question mark
- Within the committee there are varying opinions, and if the committee cannot make a decision then the campus wide community is likely unsure if we should we go ahead with wireless across campus
- Filtering down of costs for wireless – who will pay?
- Does wireless only benefit a select few who can afford laptops - does it raise the level for accessible education
- Is this the thin edge of the wedge on buying laptops?
- If there is a purchasing plan for cost competitive laptops to go with a campus wide wireless initiative it would make good sense so that students can tap into this rather than legislating mandatory laptops

Specific comments about the Wireless service from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CASU - Christian Casupanan**

Wireless is where we are headed and students should have access to wireless connections. That being said, I think that wireless would be better served in areas where students usually congregate, which has already happened in the case of the UC and the Library. I'm still a bit wary of having wireless in the classrooms without a purpose. If it is to use as a messaging program to help student connect with professors or TAs, then go ahead. However, if it is put in the classroom just for the sake of it, I'd rather see resources used elsewhere.

### **OVC – Russell Fraser**

Wireless would definitely be welcomed. Connection to the internet, anytime, anywhere, essentially makes the Academic Town Square a virtual Academic Cyber Square. All services would technically be available. If wireless is used properly, the learning experience could be directly heightened. Being online during lectures could ease asking questions, downloading lecture notes, looking up a definitions on Google if you don't understand something, etc.. However, MSN, e-mail, and all the other fantastic things on the internet, like Facebook, may make wireless internet more of a distraction for some than a helpful learning tool. Student life would be greatly enhanced with extended wireless. There would be shorter lines at the library and students would have the ability to work where they choose – it would be a great overall service. The wireless in the OVC cafeteria was a superb addition to the college and improved our student life, and I'm sure it will with the rest of the campus as well.

### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

Campus wide wireless is definitely a goal for the future; it will allow students to do homework or study, wherever they want. There is the possibility that if there was campus wide wireless, more students would bring their laptops to school and use them, rather than taking them from the reserve desk in the library. Wireless may lessen the impact of the library being the Academic Town Square because students would



not have to go to the library to get access to wireless internet. It would enhance student life because there will be less restrictions on where we can use computers. It would also enhance students learning experiences as they would be able to use instant messaging and other tools to talk to professors when they do not understand something in a lecture, for example, but are too intimidated to speak up.

**GSA – Jason Swaby**

Many members of the GSA are waiting for campus wide wireless. The service which is currently available is great, but they just want more of it. We are sure if there were more wireless hotspots on campus, more plugs available for laptops, more people would bring laptops to school. Complaints about wireless in the UC are that it is weak, and sometimes can not be accessed from places you would expect access from (i.e. behind the centre 6 food court).

**CSAHS – Chris Killer**

Wireless is a resource that many universities and other similar institutions are offering and it's a definite direction Guelph has to take. The strengths and compatibility of the wireless network on campus needs to be improved because we hear that many students find that it is not compatible with their own wireless cards. In the future, possibly looking at implementing a mandatory laptop purchase with wireless internet for first year students is recommended. This would also allow the library to reduce their need for laptops. Keeping in mind U of G's "campus politics" this might be a next to impossible initiative to take on.

**CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

What can we say that we haven't said before: we can't wait for wireless!! Our campus seems to be a bit behind the times as many other universities already have this service campus wide, and it is used to attract students to their campuses. There seems to be a lot of debate as to having wireless in the classroom. We honestly think that there will not be major issues with this service. When push comes to shove, it's the student's responsibility to get their work done, and they have the choice to go to class. With anything, including posting notes on-line, students choose whether they go to class or not. I'm sure if there is such an outcry about students not paying attention, access could be limited to the university intranet in classrooms. Wireless access across the campus will invariably lift some of the burden from the library and the use of its computers. Encouragement to bring personal computers will be important. With this, the library needs to work on increasing the number of AC outlets for laptops. As far as funding is concerned, most students would agree, if we have a wireless campus, then a certain portion of student fees could go towards covering this cost.

## V. Library IT

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Can the library's physical environment change for more study space in important study times of year
- Invest in modular workspaces that can be both group and individual - move things around easily - flexible environments
- Connect library technology to classrooms around campus for use during exams for students - group study areas
- Make classrooms available at peak study times
- Different demands for computers at different times of the year - requests for desktops at some times, laptops at others
- Laptop service survey - in the fall - less line ups and longer lending periods are all desirable to users - if no additional laptops, students said do not extend the loan period
- Fewer people bringing their own laptops – students don't find it necessary to bring laptops because of the good resources on campus – heavy, awkward, security issues
- The library services students would like to see in the portal include: course reserves, account status, red flag or notice on overdue books – email is currently sent

Specific comments about Library IT services from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CASU - Christian Casupanan**

Regarding the Town Square concept, "You can't please everyone all of the time, so it's better to please most of the people most of the time." There will never be a concrete answer as to whether or not moving the library in a more social meeting direction is good or not. It seems that there is a good balance between social and quiet sections right now. Of course, as was mentioned again and again, the library environment changes throughout the year. Would it be possible to switch up the library's physical environment (add more study space in quiet areas) when there is an influx of students in the library, especially during exams? There have been mixed reviews about the renovation of the first floor. Adding the Williams Coffee Pub and the lounge area has been welcomed by many students who see the benefit in adding more 'group study' areas in the library. However, there are others (as was mentioned in ITSAC meetings this year) that believe the first floor has become more of a social spot rather than an environment for study, so the jury is still out for that specific part of the library. In my college especially, there is a strong affection for keeping print books and not replacing everything with eBooks. This may be the 'thing of the future' or the direction libraries are taking right now, but there is something to be said about having a book in front of you rather than on a screen. Students should not be forced to just have eBooks available to them.

### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

Students seem to be happy with the services that the library offers. The most important aspects are computer availability and wireless internet issues. More and more students are now doing their research on the internet rather than trying to find a physical book in the library. In the future, it is possible that the entire library will be 'virtual', and no one will have to physically search for books anymore because they will all be online.

### **GSA – Jason Swaby**

The GSA complains about the lack of electricity outlets for laptops. The fear of their laptop being damaged or stolen prevents people from bringing their laptop to the library. With more people bringing their laptop to the library, there are now less seats and the library is considerably busier than in previous years. Graduate students believe that more current e-book purchases would help with their research. They

are more accessible than the books in the library on the racks. If Trellis was able to search the racks, journals, and e-books, that would help with the searching process.

### **CSAHS – Chris Killer**

The library as an academic town square idea is excellent. Coming to Guelph, I definitely have a different perception of what a library can and should be used for. U of G has definitely focused on using the library for more than the traditional “quiet studying” and has expanded its use as a place to socialize and share ideas and thoughts. We encourage continued improvements to the wireless internet because it does not necessarily work with all older wireless computers that students own themselves. Consider an online renewal system with laptops so when it is not busy students do not have to take them downstairs to renew them.

### **CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Our council is split on whether the library should increase the number of laptops. However we are all in agreement that there needs to be increased maintenance on the current computers available. Many students who utilize this service experience problems with connectivity to the wireless, keys broken, batteries not working, and impromptu computer restarts. Computer locks should be available on reserve for those students who require them for their laptops. However students should be encouraged to bring their own locks and not rely on the library for all services. When was the last time the library had an energy retro-fit?

There is a strong sense that a lot of electricity is wasted in the library. We suggest the following ideas:

- A campaign to turn off the study carrel lights and laptop security/protection
- Increasing the number of AC electric outlets for laptop computers
- Adding metal brackets to study carrels and tables to secure laptop locks (theft prevention)
- Increasing the number of electronic moving bookshelves (see U of G Government Stacks in the basement and OAC Herbarium) to the journals and book stacks would increase study space in the library and decrease energy costs as lights are on a motion sensor within the stacks.
- Have computer monitors and hard drives go on standby after 15 minutes of idle use
- Overhead lighting appears to be on in unnecessary areas of the library during the day; timers with light sensors should be installed so when light levels fall below a certain threshold overhead lights turn on
- Winter/wind-proofing windows would minimize heat losses especially on the south-west side of the building

## VI. Email and WEBmail

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Concern about the growing amount of spam in WEBmail - a marked increase
- Spam filtering rules used at UofG are much less strict than in private industry or other academic environments
- Education around web usage needs to be strengthened so people understand how their use of the internet affects spam in their inbox
- WEBmail - noticed that this year it is so much slower.
- Students curious if CCS recognizes the competition with G-mail and what this means to the ongoing service

Specific comments about email and WEBmail services from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CASU - Christian Casupanan**

The most prominent theme is all the spam that has been getting through to WebMail in recent years. In my first and second years I received virtually no spam, but now it's almost a daily occurrence. That is the same for most people I talk to and it is often from the same senders. The "block all but U of G emails" function is there as a last resort. There are people who send emails to UofG accounts who are not affiliated with the university. This includes family, friends from home, and even fellow students who wish to use personal email. Email is very important to students. As it is the official way of communication on campus, students expect it to be a reliable service. It is true that there are periods during the day which are busier than others, but students really want to have consistency which comes with a tool that is important in day-to-day life.

### **OVC – Russell Fraser**

The importance of e-mail to students is tremendous. The vast majority of communication (not only from the university), but within student groups, classes, colleges, etc., occurs through e-mail. I, and most of my college, would be lost without e-mail. Functionality should be the number one priority. Education on how to properly manage e-mail would be a strong compliment to increased space. As it stands now, it is possible to save the majority of e-mail messages without running out of space. Though some services do offer large quotas, 2GB for every student account seems to be shooting high. Back to the number one priority: functionality. The biggest problem with WEBmail is the speed of the service – peak hours are noticeably slower and checking e-mail becomes laborious. WEBmail functionality is otherwise pretty good.

### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

Email is extremely important to all students since it is now the primary communication tool between the university and students. Email also serves other purposes to students, particularly if they are involved in extra curricular activities that involve students and/or people from other places. Priority should be quota – the inbox fills up so fast that a lot of students are not receiving important emails. We have also experienced problems where emails were not received by recipients – particularly important ones. An acceptable email service is one that is reliable and has enough space that you can receive important emails without worrying that you won't because you do not have enough space in your inbox.

### **GSA – Jason Swaby**

GSA members complain about the service being slow and being kicked off during peak hours. Many graduate students use a commercial email address such as G-mail or Hotmail due to the space and folder options. Also, G-mail offers a "sent from" option, so many of the members use G-mail to substitute for

their WEBmail account. There are two main concerns with the university email system: it is slow and it lacks many features found in a commercial product.

**CSAHS – Chris Killer**

The WEBmail service shows a lot of lags and slowdowns during peak times and when inboxes become more full.

**CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

A lot of our students have found that services such as G-mail work satisfactorily as a substitute for WEBmail (see GSA comments). I personally use G-mail as my primary email account, and have it set up so that my Gmail sent mail is seen as myuserid@uoguelph.ca. If WEBmail had many of the features of G-mail such as automatic draft saving and similar quota capabilities, a lot of students would be happier with the service. Otherwise, limited connectivity during peak hours and quota are the only issues raised when it comes to WEBmail.

## VII. Lab Standards

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- There are major inconsistencies across campus in terms of how computer labs are set up
- Students would like to see more uniformity in labs but they also realize that this relates to monetary support and software applications availability in these locations.
- ITSAC believes there should be a baseline of money available for labs within various departments and a baseline of applications and computer specifications to provide more consistency
- Lab standards are very important
- Roving access to desktops would be important
- Make a centrally accessible list of where labs are on campus and what is available in the labs and have this available in the library and online to help redirect people
- Colleges should amalgamate their lab provisions
- Need to offer a certain level of service in labs across campus and applications in the library should be used as a base for all labs on campus
- Different colleges do have different needs, so standardization may not work well in all cases
- Students should be asked to list what they think the minimum standards in labs should be
- Perhaps ITSAC could be a central body to advise on lab software each year, based on new needs from the various colleges, students
- Students now are concerned that with the decentralization of labs that some students may be paying into an overall system and not benefiting from it - CASU vs. CPES

Specific comments about lab standards from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CASU – Christian Casupanan**

Each lab is attuned to a specific set of students. However, the computers should have at least uniformity of baseline programs. Maybe each one should have the same programs regularly available on library computers? There is college specific lab space for most of the colleges on campus. The issue as mentioned is the disparity between the equipment and programs available in each individual lab.

### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

Baseline software would alleviate some of the problems with labs. We do not think that college specific labs would work because a lot of programs, particularly in commerce, overlap. Student governments should look into getting money from their students via a lab fee to make upgrades to equipment and even software so that those labs that are not up to par are fixed

### **GSA – Jason Swaby**

Many graduate students have their own offices. There are no complaints about labs.

### **CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Labs should be standardized across campus with basic programs such as MS Office, WordPerfect, Adobe Photoshop, statistics and web publishing software. We understand that not all labs will have the exact same function, but basics should be standardized. All computers should have the same capabilities with speed, DVD, CD-R, USB keys. Does the university not have a contract with a specific company (Dell, HP) which would bring down costs? Labs should be accessible to all students. During peak times the library could have posted alternative areas on campus where computers are available for use. These labs could have printing abilities and use the same printer cards as the library which can be reloaded at these locations as well; this would bring some consistency to campus IT services. We do not feel that student governments should be responsible for computer lab maintenance.

## IX. Learning Technologies

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Students are concerned about the trend whereby profs use textbook software along with their textbooks to cover course material – it is specific for the course, and costs the students more money but doesn't really provide more services than WebCT
- Clicker technology brings a similar concern because of technical issues that have nullified their use as well as the costs involved
- Students don't feel they provide a great deal of learning benefit
- The Portal has a chance to link courses and course resource materials like reserves which would be desirable to students
- Wireless presented with learning integration makes sense, but students are not sure it will be used in that way
- Students are concerned that the technology will surpass the physical capabilities in the classrooms as most are not well set up for laptops

Specific comments about learning technologies from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Having all courses use WebCT would be beneficial and would maximize the use of the software. This would allow for notes to be more readily available. Our students are not necessarily concerned with technology in the classroom, but want to see more emphasis on upgrading laboratory technology. When it comes down to it, students are quite happy with what they have in lectures. Upgrades to classrooms, to have full presentation technology, wired with digital multi-screen presentations and stereo sound, are important. Classrooms should be designed for multimedia presentations. Equipment in the room, including lights, should be controlled from the touch screen set up, much like in Rozanski Hall. As explained earlier, we do not see wireless as a problem with classroom learning. Training for faculty on software, and hardware is extremely important as many still use overheads which are very difficult to see. Online evaluations are a great idea, but were even better when they went towards course work (we used to have it so that 2% of course work was for faculty evaluations). All teaching labs should be set up in the sciences so that students can photograph specimens, slides etc., from microscopes, and computer ready. Other points of interest students raised include having classrooms set up so that live conferencing from international guests could be achieved.

## VIII. Future of Technology

### iCampus Plan

Key points raised at the ITSAC meetings this year:

- Not that easy for students to pick up on the iCampus plan message due to the jargon and therefore may not have a clear vision or how to respond
- A technology survey should be undertaken to provide input on direction around this concept
- Focus groups outside of ITSAC might be helpful and feasible, so that various people and their input could broaden the discussion
- A town hall meeting to present survey results could be held and then focus groups could be formed
- Is ITSAC discussed within the colleges or on the agenda at meetings?

Specific comments about the iCampus Plan from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

#### **CASU – Christian Casupanan**

iCampus is a great idea. It will go a long way in continuing the healthy discussion and fostering communication that UofG is known for. There should definitely be some sort of feedback forum. ITSAC should continue acting as a resource that finds out what students want from their perspective. In that way, the iCampus plan can change as necessary. ITSAC shouldn't be a part of its governance but should provide input.

#### **GSA – Jason Swaby**

Many students are excited about the idea that there will be more integrated IT throughout the campus. Also, integrating the portal is a good start to the iCampus plan.

#### **CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Students like the idea of iCampus: a cohesive whole to IT services. Students would like more student input; ITSAC should thus be involved with university IT decision making as most of the services are utilized by and for students.

### **Provost's White Paper: "Re-imagining the Undergraduate Learning Experience"**

Key areas of discussion from the ITSAC meeting in March 2006:

#### White Paper section 3.1.1 The First Year Experience

- The portal provides a new way of channeling information to first year students in a way that can get them info 'just in time'
- Provide information on the bookstore - how to buy text books
- Access to the library - how to use the library...learning about journal indexes
- Teach new students about information literacy mid-way through the semester when there is a need and students aren't overwhelmed
- Provide notification to students regarding Awards and Scholarships, especially if it would identify/show scholarships a student qualifies for
- User customization of push content in the portal is important



## White Paper section 3.3.1 Research Based Learning

- Library as Academic Town Square has merit
- Centralized services in Library is good - books, journals...however it may be too social
- Social activity makes it noisy on every floor and is driving students away from the library
- Option to look at more e-books
- E-Textbooks may be an option to provide a decrease in costs for students or if not E-Textbooks, possibly electronic/downloadable course packs
- Digital Exam Bank - partnership with CBS and Learning Commons
- Opportunity to mark up electronic texts, like highlighting and commenting on a PDF

## White Paper section 3.4.1 Skills Designation

- Specific to IT, the idea of an IT certification that students could achieve by completing designated skills completion 'tests' might have some merit - but a university degree demonstrates the ability to learn so it may not be relevant if IT changes regularly
- It might be useful to develop an IT certification that had a theme or different hierarchy of relevance depending on the college one attends
- Training would have to be available and developed specific to the IT skills certification so students can learn what they need to know – tie this to the student workshops that are currently offered
- Students would likely pay a reasonable fee to get this if it was developed properly and could be useful to their graduating portfolio
- Blogs do not really demonstrate writing skills
- Perhaps centrally developed E-Portfolio for students that shows any relevant electronic documents or IT related accomplishments would be useful, including resumes

## White Paper section 3.5 Internationalizing the Curriculum

- Strong support for this - lots of interest
- Video conferencing - real time for lectures at U of G as well as from abroad.
- Opens awareness to alternative learning opportunities, abroad studies
- Could draw students into classes and improve enrolment

## White Paper section 3.8 Technology Assisted Learning

- Class size identified as problem; challenges student-professor interaction and student-student interaction
- Blended classes - put lectures online, but have face-to-face sessions for discussion and a review of examples, case studies, problems and exploration – have to view lecture first
- Students expressed DE being both more and less effective, based on learning styles - this lends support for hybrid courses and mandatory WebCT for all courses.
- Online environment has greater opportunity for peer-instruction
- "We ought to provide the necessary facilities" - baseline for university resources in all departments, as outlined with the iCampus Plan Scholar's Toolbox.
- Consistency of classroom resources - Rozanski vs. Axelrod
- Computing standards and consistency in computing resources

## White paper section 3.10 Supported Learning Environment

- Student Senate Caucus see Forums as a positive method to extend their interaction and participation
- High volume email list has been successful with a very low problem rate (> 1%)
- More power in the library and other well used buildings in order to support laptops - hydro outlets need to be added to buildings

Specific comments about the iCampus Plan from the ITSAC college representatives, on behalf of their constituents:

### **SFOAC – Heather Hargrave**

We think that in the future you will see less classroom lectures and more interactive learning via video conferences. There seems to be a movement at UofG towards a virtual campus. We do need to look at enhancing the undergraduate learning experience since that is what students are paying for when coming to the university. The possibility of having students from around the world taking similar courses and being connected is a great way to network and is definitely a possibility for the future that would enhance student life. We do not think that blogs will necessarily enhance student life – WebCT has a conference feature that allows students to post questions to one another and the professor about topics of interest. We need to focus more on informing incoming students about all of the academic and support services that are available on campus – could do this via the portal.

### **CBSSC – Alyson Prokop**

Students do not want to see more internet/DE education courses, especially as the costs of tuition are increasing. The idea that DE/virtual learning is the future of the university takes away from the social and interactive atmosphere. There was unanimous consensus from our board that in-class learning is far superior to DE education, which does not tend to be challenging. Students would like to see upgrades to classrooms across campus to ensure uniformity and consistency with technology. Internationalizing the classroom does not appear to be a necessity on the list of concerns of our undergraduate students when it comes to learning; but used for *occasional* guest speakers, it could have merits. More online resources are not necessarily beneficial; there appears to be a great deal of paper wasted as students print numerous copies of articles, notes, and lectures through the semester. Our students would like the university to adopt more energy efficient means when it comes to technology. This may stray slightly from the mandate of the committee, but at the same time it would be a learning forum for students and an exchange of information through technology. This may be as simple as energy retrofits, or as complicated as creating power generation stations. We have engineers, we have environmental science students, we have agricultural students; why not use the resources we have to improve our technology use and revolutionize our campus? Biodiesel, biodigesters, wind, solar and hydro are only a couple of the new technologies that our campus must address and adopt if we are to be fore-runners in technology. Why not use this technology to teach others, to give them the information in a different context? IT is not limited to virtual teaching.

## **Future of ITSAC**

The committee is recommending that the ITSAC membership be broadened next year to be more inclusive to other stakeholders in the U of G student community. Additional members could include:

- A representative from Interhall, to speak to residential constituents interests
- Possibly an Alumni representative
- A student representative from the Centre for Students with Disabilities:
  - Certain technologies present new opportunities and challenges for students with disabilities. Since there are diverse physical, psychological, and learning disabilities that affect students on campus, it is difficult to represent all of their concerns with a single individual. However, ITSAC would benefit from having a student representative from the CSD because many of the technological barriers and merits are common between students with disabilities, while their adaptations differ.

Numerous students with disabilities receive specific accommodations on tests and other forms of evaluation. The introduction of clickers in some courses creates a barrier for students with disabilities who are physically unable to use the device, require additional time, or cannot complete the activity because of their disability. Students with disabilities should not be singled out in class because they are unable to complete the

quiz or survey presented in the same way as their peers. If clickers are going to be used in the classroom, instructors need to consider this and work with the CSD to make this accessible to all students.

Electronic books that can be read with a reading machine are very valuable to students with disabilities and make library materials more accessible.

The committee also discussed the merits of an ITSAC sponsored survey

- The committee feels that ITSAC could draw input from the broad student body by implementing an annual or semi-annual survey that directly asked students what their IT priorities are
- This might help to guide the ITSAC report
- The survey could be promoted through the college lists to ensure it gets equal input from all areas of campus
- If it comes from within the college then students are more likely to respond with pertinent answers
- A general questionnaire with a comment area would ensure there were college specifics
- A survey that included questions about the iCampus Plan would be a good way of gathering better input on the larger scale IT planning as well
- As mentioned elsewhere, having a survey and then holding a town hall meeting to provide students with the results and to lead discussions on this might be a possibility